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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 000115

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TAGS: PREL PGOV TU

SUBJECT: U/S BURNS' MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER ERDOGAN

Classified By: Ambassador Wilson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(C) Summary: Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan stressed Turkey's concerns about a possible Armenian genocide resolution in the US Congress, the PKK and Kirkuk in a meeting with U/S Burns January 18 in Ankara. Erdogan also spoke appreciatively about the President's new Iraq strategy, interest in supporting progress toward Middle East peace, and hopes for progress in de-isolating the Turkish Cypriots in ways that will help spur progress toward a comprehensive Cyprus settlement. U/S Burns emphasized Secretary Rice's interest in and commitment to Turkey as a strategic partner. He declared that the Administration will oppose any Armenia resolution, but said prospects for success are uncertain and urged an effort by Turkey to move towards normalizing its relations with Yerevan. He affirmed the President's strong view that the U.S. must help Turkey on the PKK and, while acknowledging Kirkuk's sensitivity, said decisions on its status are for the Iraqis to make. The discussion also touched briefly on Afghanistan and Turkish-Greek relations. End summary.

2.(C) On January 18, U/S for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns met for 90 minutes with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara. Burns was accompanied by Ambassador, NEA PDAS Jim Jeffrey, EUR/SE Director Doug Silliman, P Staff assistant Herro Mustafa, and notetaker. Erdogan was joined by MPs Saban Disli and Egemen Bagis, foreign policy advisor Ahmet Davutoglu, and prime ministry and MFA staff.

3.(C) Armenian Genocide Resolution: Erdogan said that Turkey is fed up with attempts by the Armenian Diaspora to "smear" and discredit Turkey. He lamented various countries passage of "genocide" resolutions and asked for a strong effort by the President and other senior officials, as in previous years, to ensure no such resolution passes in the US. He highlighted President Clinton's successful personal effort to turn off a similar resolution in 2000. Erdogan noted his own proposal to establish a joint Turkish-Armenian commission on the issue. Other countries could join it. He challenged Armenia and other countries in the region to open their historical archives, as Turkey has done, so that historians and scholars could objectively study the issue.

4.(C) U/S Burns said the USG understands the sensitivity of

the Armenian genocide issue in Turkey. The Administration will strongly oppose any Armenia resolution. Frankly, the effort may not succeed. Turkey could help the President and Secretary Rice work more effectively against a resolution by

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undertaking measures to normalize relations with Armenia. Ambassador encouraged Erdogan to make one more attempt with Armenia to reach agreement and get started work by a Turkish-Armenian bilateral commission or commissions, perhaps by quietly sending a personal emissary to meet with Armenian authorities.

5.(C) Terrorism/Afghanistan: Erdogan hailed USG-GOT cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Turkey had been doing its part, as evidenced by its military and economic contributions in Afghanistan. U/S Burns thanked Turkey for its efforts. Looking ahead, the USG believes NATO will need more troops to resist Taliban offensives expected in the spring, and Afghanistan will need more help with training, reconstruction, and counter-narcotics. We hope Turkey can do more. For our part, Secretary Rice expects to announce a large additional assistance package for Afghanistan, most of which will go to strengthening Afghani military and police and reconstruction.

6.(C) PKK: Erdogan referred to his conversations last summer and since with President Bush on the PKK problem. He appreciated that the President understands Turkey's predicament and agrees we have to act together on this as on other terrorism issues. People expect results, however. They want PKK camps demolished and leaders arrested. Erdogan said the January 18 raid on the Mahkmour refugee camp in northern Iraq was a good step, but ultimately would have no real impact because there was apparently advance warning of

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the raid and no weapons were found. U/S Burns affirmed President Bush's view that the U.S. must help Turkey on the PKK issue. For that reason, we named General Ralston to head our efforts. We understand Turkey's frustration. The raid on Mahkmour was a good first step and more must be done to close the camp this year, but the action sent an important message to the PKK. We are trying to develop further concrete actions that Turkey, the US and Iraq can take, and we hope General Ralston can discuss these when he visits later this month. Burns asked for time for this effort to develop and no unilateral Turkish action in the meantime. Burns urged Turkey to improve its dialogue with Iraq, especially the Iraqi Kurds, on the issue.

7.(C) Iraq: Erdogan spoke positively of the President's new Iraq strategy and noted he supported the President publicly. He noted there are many problems, and he highlighted Kirkuk. The current "civil war", he said, has repercussions for Turkey and the region. For this reason, Turkey wants to play a constructive and meaningful role in stabilizing Iraq. Erdogan urged that any referendum on the status of Kirkuk be postponed and said that decisions on the city's status should reflect consensus among all relevant groups. He was upset over comments from Iraqi Kurdish leaders that Turkey is meddling in Iraq's domestic affairs. Acts by the KRG to position itself as independent, such as its recent raising of a KRG flag at an official event, were dangerous. U/S Burns appreciated Turkey's helpful role on Iraq. He said that while we recognize the issue's sensitivity in Turkey, the US believed the status issue can be resolved by the Iraqis.

8.(C) Middle East: Erdogan said Turkey wants to support efforts toward Middle East peace. This was the purpose of his recent trips to Lebanon, Syria, Iran, and Jordan. In Lebanon, Erdogan met with leaders on all sides -- the President, Prime Minister, Parliament Speaker, Parliamentary leader of Hezbollah and others -- to help them achieve consensus. On Israeli-Palestinian relations, Erdogan said Turkey maintains relations with both sides and stands ready

to assist if asked. He noted Turkey's efforts to get updated information on the condition of the kidnapped Israeli soldier. Turkey will host PM Olmert on February 15, and it will meet also with President Abbas and possibly Hamas later.

9.(C) U/S Burns stated that Secretary Rice would participate in the upcoming Paris conference on Lebanon that is being organized by President Chirac to increase support for the Siniora government, and that the USG would shortly announce a major financial contribution to Lebanon. He said that Secretary Rice's current effort with PM Olmert and Abu Mazen

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reflects the desire of the President to make a major effort to resolve problems and achieve a breakthrough on Israeli-Palestinian relations in the near future. We hoped Turkey would play a helpful role.

10.(C) Cyprus: Erdogan appealed for more effort to resolve Cyprus. He said it was unjust that Greek Cypriots voted against the Annan plan but were "rewarded" by being accepted into the EU, while the Turkish Cypriots remained isolated. He asked that the US pressure Republic of Cyprus President Papadopoulos and the GOG to take concrete steps toward an overall settlement. He urged US steps to de-isolate the north. Direct flights into Ercan airport in northern Cyprus would be a good achievement. Burns said the US is urging UNSYG Ban to engage on Cyprus and would continue to encourage the EU to lift the north's isolation. Burns also reaffirmed the USG's full support for Turkey's accession to the EU.

11.(C) Turkey/Greece: Erdogan said Turkey will keep working on its relationship with Greece. He had visited Athens several times. PM Karamanlis had paid no official visit, though word had come recently that he may do so in March or April. Erdogan complained that Greece's treatment of the Turkish minority in Western Thrace impeded efforts to strengthen ties with Athens. He said that Muslims there are not allowed full educational, cultural, religious, and other rights. Burns said the USG had asked the GOG to grant more autonomy to the Muslim minority and calls on the GOT to meet

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the Greeks halfway by re-opening the Halki seminary. There is much the two governments can do to advance these issues, and the US stands ready to help behind the scenes. Erdogan replied that the approach adopted by the Patriarchate was making it difficult to resolve Halki. Burns noted the importance of the Halki issue for the USG, the Greek-American community and for the Patriarchate. He said he would give FM Gul specific options for resolution of Halki the next day and asked Turkey to keep an open mind.

12.(U) This cable has been cleared by U/S Burns.

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